

## The American Dream[er]

Everything was different: the weather outside, the houses, the streets. Sporting blue jeans and a black hoodie complimented by blue and white Jordans, she accompanied her immediate family through travel. After days of anticipation, they took their first steps onto American soil, together. Traveling by foot for hours upon hours, the 7-year-old Mexico City native was relieved to have finally reached her destination: the other side of the Mexican/American border.

She isn't alone in this. Since 2015, the Mexican immigrant population has increased to over 43.3 million, with Mexico natives coming to America for the opportunity of a better life. Often, they are motivated by hopes of financial advantage, more safety, or religious beliefs, but every immigrant has a reason.

She and her family were been motivated by all of these reasons, and when she reached the age of 15, she and her brother began their process of joining the DACA program.

[DACA](#), or the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, is an immigration policy that was pushed forth by President Barack Obama in June of 2012. It works as a “two-year, renewable program” allowing for people who meet the qualifications to apply for “temporary work permits, Social Security numbers, and protection from deportation.” To qualify for the program, youth must be at least 15 years old, born on or after June 16, 1981, and a U.S. resident. Before the age of 16, these young people must have lived in the U.S. since June 5th of 2007, and they may not already possess a lawful immigration status. They must have a clean criminal record and have at least a high school level education; this includes being currently enrolled in school, being a GED recipient or graduate of high school, or being an honorably discharged military veteran.

According to [Mississippi and DACA](#), “[the] DACA has allowed nearly 1,500 young people to come forward, pass background checks, and live and work legally in the country.” [Data recorded by](#) the U.S Citizenship and Immigration Services shows that the application intake for citizenship in Mississippi, accepted until the month of December 2016, had an initial value of 1,681; there were 1,17 renewals; and the total amount of application received were 2,946. However, only 1,439 initials were approved to date, with 1,177 renewals being approved to date, as well: a total of 2,616. The results and data of the charts also suggest that states with a larger population had a larger intake of requests.

According to United States Citizenship and Immigration Services, DACA has helped thousands of young undocumented immigrants feel more secure in and contribute more to the United States. DACA provides immediate tangible and emotional benefits to both applicants and their families. On the most basic level, DACA has improved the lives of undocumented

immigrants who entered the United States as children by simply giving them a means to remain in the nation that has become their home.

When a student is born and raised in the United States, it is a questionable approach to send them to a country where they are foreign to both the language and land simply because their passport isn't the same as ours. DACA students are underneath a constant pressure to prove their worthiness and contributions to the United States. On September 11, a young, teenage boy, due to a small offense of carrying one gram of marijuana, was [at risk of being removed](#) from the DACA program. As the misdemeanor would have gone unnoticed for many other teens, there's a strong possibility that he is only victimized severely because he is enrolled in the DACA program.

This situation occurs with many children and teens underneath the DACA program. Even though this specific type of encounter may leave some students at a temporary disadvantage, their involvement in it can still lead to more advantages. The main disadvantage is that Dreamers are most likely to be prosecuted more harshly for small crimes when a typical American teenager would get away with a scolding or a slap on the wrist. The most important aspect of the program is that it gives opportunities to those who need them most.

Thousands of Dreamers have similarly difficult experiences in which they travel to the United States for an ample amount of valid reasons, mainly for the opportunities the country may offer them. Arriving at ages ranging from newborns to 14 years old, these children just want to live in a country where they are accepted.

“It makes us more confident,” they say, “and we fit in.”